



The Old Ironsides Report

20 July 2003

U.S., Iraqi doctors team up for girl's surgery

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BAGHDAD, Iraq – Staff Sgt. Jeffery L. Bell, a licensed practical nurse from the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment's Forward Surgical Team, blows bubbles in the air from a bubble wand to cheer up an 8-year-old Iraqi girl, who is getting a hydration intravenous drip in preparation for major surgery the next day.

Her father waits in the room as the nurses and doctors try to calm the patient. Her left foot is wrapped in gauze.

Maj. Daniel White is present. He is an orthopedic surgeon with the 2nd ACR's Forward Surgical Team. The team's primary mission is to treat American soldiers injured in the line of duty, but they also give medical care to Iraqi civilians when the medical needs are beyond the ability of local hospitals.

White will perform reconstructive surgery on the young patient's foot along with Lt. Col. Alexander Stojadinovic and two Iraqi doctors, Dr. Ali Nidhalnaddil and Dr. Usam Noilnaljar from Al Wasity hospital in Baghdad.

The girl, Zainad Khalaf, was in a motor vehicle accident, which severely injured her left foot. White saw her initially and took care of her for two days. She was then transported to the Al Wasity hospital.

Under the security conditions in Iraqi, local hospitals find it difficult to have a 24-hour staff on hand for major surgical care. Since the forward surgical team had the staff, and due to their location and equipment, they invited the Iraqi doctors onto the U.S. compound to help perform the surgery needed to save her foot.

The four doctors performed a free muscle graft surgery. It was a complex procedure in which they took a muscle from her back and placed it on her foot where her muscle was torn away.

"Not many surgeons have the skills to do this task," said Stojadinovic. "We are fortunate to have their (Ali and Usam's) help. They have a 90 percent success rate."

"This has never been done at this (forward surgical team) level," said Maj. Kimberly A. Smith, the



Iraqi doctors, Dr. Usam Noilnaljar (left) and Dr. Ali Nidhalnaddil, work with Dr. (Lt. Col.) Alexander Stojadinovic preparing the sonogram to check the condition of Zainad Khalaf's foot after surgery at a U.S. compound in Baghdad.

head nurse. "If it wasn't for the cooperation with our Iraqi counterparts and the fact that we occupied a military hospital with a working operative microscope, this (operation) would not be possible."

Stojadinovic said even combat support hospitals do not have the equipment for this type of surgery.

Both Stojadinovic and White said they have a real professional respect for the medical personnel in Baghdad.

"It is amazing how these surgeons can teach themselves in such austere conditions," Stojadinovic said. "They were not permitted out of the country, so they learned from reading American and English texts."

"The Iraqi doctors are well trained," White said.

"The main problem is that most local hospitals are ill-equipped to handle major surgery. The hospitals have the equivalent of 1970's American technology."

Zainad's father keeps her close company. The forward surgical team allows one parent to stay overnight with children.

"She's going to be a frightened little girl for the next several days," said Smith, "She trusts us, but she never knows what to expect."

NEWS

Iraq Nuke Evidence Was Thin, Experts Say

WASHINGTON (AP) - Even as the Bush administration concluded Iraq was reviving its nuclear weapons program, key signs - such as scientific data of weapons work and evidence of research by Iraq's nuclear experts - were missing, according to several former intelligence officials. The public case that Iraq was pursuing nuclear weapons was built primarily on several suspicious items Iraq reportedly tried to import, such as uranium, aluminum tubes and precision machinery. But the uranium story is now in dispute, and many of the other items had possible uses unrelated to nuclear weapons.

Army considering punishment for soldiers who griped on TV

WASHINGTON - The Army is considering whether to punish soldiers in Iraq who griped about conditions there to a television reporter.

Some soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division complained to ABC-TV this week after their units were told they would be leaving Iraq soon, then had their homecoming postponed.

Criticism of superior officers is a breach of military rules. The Army will determine whether any soldier will be charged with breaking those rules, said Pentagon spokeswoman Chief Petty Officer Diane Perry.

The commander of U.S. forces in Iraq said the soldiers' comments show the frustration of troops who are ready to go home.

"Every now and then we've got to look at our young people and understand why they said what they said, and then do something about it," said Gen. John Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command.

He said it was up to the soldiers' direct commanders to decide if they should be punished.

"None of us that wear this uniform are free to say anything disparaging about the secretary of defense, or the president of the United States," he added.

Chaplain's thought for the day:

Happiness is not a matter of events; it depends upon the tides of the mind.

Alice Meyvell

It's thought that Abe Lincoln once said, "We're as happy as we make up our minds to be." In other words, we decide to be happy. Bad weather, even angry friends don't have to ruin our own happiness unless we let them.

We're always in control of our own thoughts and feelings, and happiness is a feeling we can choose even when others around us have chosen to be angry or sad.

Even when the day is gloomy and none of our plans are working out, we can still be cheerful if we decide to be. How lucky we are that someone else can't decide for us how to feel.

We'd be nothing more than robots if that were true.

SPORTS

Bjorn Leads British Open; Woods Two Back

SANDWICH, England (AP) -- Tiger Woods holed a shot from the bunker to take the British Open lead, and then dropped back. Sergio Garcia chipped in from the fairway for an amazing par. And Mark Roe, who played as well as anyone, was sent home for using the wrong scorecard.

Amid all the craziness, Thomas Bjorn plodded along with a bunch of pars, good enough to grab the lead on a steamy, sunny Saturday at Royal St. George's.

The Dane shot a 2-under-par 69 which left him at 1 under through 54 holes - and the only player under par heading to the final round Sunday.

Woods electrified the crowd with a pair of eagles on the front side, surging into the lead for the first time in the tournament with a 5-under 31. But he played the treacherous back nine at 3 over to finish with a 69.

Beginning the day four strokes behind David Love III, Woods will go to the final round two strokes behind Bjorn's 215.

The leader took advantage of No. 4, a short par-5 where he made an eagle. After bogeying the sixth and making birdie at 7, he finished up with 11 straight pars to earn a spot with Love in the final group on Sunday.

In other news...

Miss., via Iraq — and no postage due

PASCAGOULA, Miss. (AP) — A woman's payment to the gas company took a long route — through Iraq.

The bill arrived at the Pascagoula city clerk's office in an envelope decorated with a hand-drawn stamp and a message from Iraq apologizing for the late delivery.

R.D. Hawkins, of Gautier, had mailed her \$49.36 natural gas bill in April to Pascagoula, about five miles away. It arrived at the city clerk's office on Wednesday.

"Please forgive the lateness of this bill," an American serviceman who identified himself only as Spc. Fifield had scribbled on the back of the small envelope. "It had to go all the way around the world to Operation Iraqi Freedom due to a computer error."

"I am Spc. Fifield and enjoy my time here in Iraq, and so do the Iraqis," the soldier wrote. "Thank you for supporting your troops."

No more is known about Fifield other than he is part of the Army's 187th Infantry, officials said.

The envelope was postmarked April 4 and went through the district postal office in Gulfport. Fifield sent the payment back on its way May 11.

City employee Sharon Woodward had thought a child had drawn the stamp beneath the real postage until she found the message.

"I thought, 'Gosh, this is so neat,'" Woodward said.

The green and yellow swirl stamp underneath the real postage "was real cute," she said.

TODAY'S WEATHER

High: 109F

Low: 84F

